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FIRST AID AND PREPAREDNESS¹

By W. S. ROUNDTREE, M.D.

Wylam, Alabama

The most important economic movement in America, today, is the conservation of its human resources, both from a humanitarian and a commercial viewpoint. All must admit that the preservation of human life should be the subject of most importance to the world at large and its greatest responsibility. That this point of view is rapidly gaining in popularity, is manifested by the ever increasing efforts of separate and combined agencies to prevent the needless waste of human life, by preventing the spread of such diseases as tuberculosis, typhoid fever and malaria, as well as by preventing the unnecessary injuries and illness incurred by industrial workers, a great field to which serious attention is just being directed.

Statistics of industrial accidents in the United States show that 500,000 workers are killed or incapacitated annually. If we estimate the average earning power of each of those who fall victims to accidents at but \$500, annually, it means an actual loss to the country of \$250,000,000 per year, to say nothing of the personal loss to family and friends. It is not necessary to prove, therefore, that attention given to and knowledge acquired of, first-aid work will pay, as it has long since proven that where this has been well and generally taught, it has resulted in reducing sickness and accidents one-half—certainly a stake worth striving for.

At the time of an accident or an acute illness, a person who knows how to render first-aid is invaluable, and nowhere has this been more splendidly proven than in the European war, where first-aid is saving so many more lives than do the surgeons. It is said that the fate of an injured person depends upon the act of the man into whose hands he falls, and certainly if men and women are not trained in this line of work we, as a nation, will pay dearly for our unpreparedness. I recently heard a noted army officer say that he would rather have a well trained first-aid team in time of war than six of the best surgeons in the United States, as he was quite positive they would be of more service to the fighting man. Realizing, as I have always, the importance of thoroughly trained first-aid assistance, wherever accidents or

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injuries are likely to occur, such training among army men seems to me one of the most necessary branches of instruction for preparation for either war or peace. Throughout my many years of experience in training men and women in such work, I have always been an advocate of simplified method and practical adaptation of whatever means happen to be at hand when assistance is needed. In my lectures and demonstrations to soldiers of the National Guard, I have endeavored to impress upon them the real duties and responsibilities of the first-aid man; how he must act quickly and think more quickly without waiting for orders, assistance or supplies, remembering that the fate of his wounded comrade lies in his hands, and that lacking, as he does, the experience of a well-trained nurse, he yet must act with judgment, caution and in accordance with modern surgical practice.

The lesson of the European war is that of the need of preparedness. This has found its echo in our own country, where the question of the day is that of national preparedness against war. We are, however, a people of peculiar temperament, holding our allegiance with tenacity to only two issues, our politics and our religion. I trust we, as a nation, will add preparedness as a third and vital issue. In past wars in which our country has been involved, the lack of medical preparedness has been a national humiliation. The unnecessary suffering and the lives uselessly sacrificed caused in each a wave of horror and indignation to sweep over the country, and I believe the teaching of first-aid to the injured, to men, women and children is a step in the right direction if we would prevent history from repeating itself. The necessity and value of prompt and efficient first-aid in sickness and injuries need no comment. One with the knowledge of what to do and the presence of mind to put it into effect is invaluable. This work is not a matter of speculation any longer. Wherever it has been taught, in industrial works of any kind, it has reduced accidents and sickness one-half. There has never been a time when it was more needed than now. The increase in rapid locomotion of many kinds and the constant multiplicity of factories, workshops, mines and quarries make it necessary that we as a progressive people should use all such measures as will reduce unnecessary accident and disease.

First-aid preparedness means the application of efficiency to the conservation of health and life by the prevention of those diseases that cause a more or less rapid disintegration of a nation, and the coördinating the life-saving with the life-destroying branches of the industries of our country. This end can be attained only by building up public sentiment, through a campaign of education, forcing the public to realize the very patent fact that efficient men and women trained in

rendering first aid to the injured are an asset of incalculable value, not only in time of war, but in time of peace, as well.

Conservation of human life and human energy is by far the most important question before the American people today, and to teach them along this line is a step in the right direction. We, as surgeons, physicians and nurses, must do the greater part of this work by teaching the people this practical branch of medicine and surgery, thereby rendering an everlasting service to suffering man.

The time has come when we must forget all selfish motives, remembering the great fundamental principle embodied in the saying: "Do unto others as you would that they should do to you."

MEDICAL INSPECTION OF RURAL SCHOOL CHILDREN

The *New York State Medical Journal* for December contains a paper on this subject by William A. Howe, M.D., in which he gives some interesting statements as the result of the first year of the administration of the medical inspection law. Some reports were highly gratifying while others were equally discouraging.

Many instances were cited where certificates were issued without seeing the child, some being questioned on the telephone, and even the teacher filling out the cards and the physician signing them.

Several cases were reported where operative treatment was necessary on tonsils a few days after a perfect bill of health had been given.

In another instance, the day after the supposed inspection was completed and health certificates issued, the teacher discovered a bad case of pediculosis in one of the children. When she reported it to the inspector he absolutely refused to advise or in any manner assist in its relief.

In one district, \$2000 was expended for medical inspection in one year, and little or no follow-up work accomplished. In this district, thirty children were examined in one hour and one dollar paid for each examination. It is but fair to say, however, that in this district many successful cases were reported.

One superintendent on examining the certificates of several of his schools finds the report exactly the same for the teeth of all of the children. In this district though all were given a certificate of good health, several cases of seriously impaired breathing were operated soon after inspection.

One of the most striking instances that has come to our attention is that of a child wearing one glass eye to whom a certificate of perfect vision was issued for both eyes.

Several teachers have complained of the same tongue depressor being used on thirteen or fourteen children, then on herself, without such being sterilized. In one case the teacher became ill with tonsillitis within seven days.

Trustees have also complained of this same neglect, offering such as sufficient justification for not complying with the law.

In the midst of so many neglectful experiences we find many, many, other occasions in which the work has been carefully and conscientiously performed, in which most gratifying results have been accomplished. Many grateful parents have written thanking the department for the wonderful relief extended to their children. Hundreds, yes, thousands, of children have been placed on a higher plane of physical fitness."